

II. Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Konagaya (US 6,552,778) ["Konagaya"]. Applicants traverse the rejection.

Applicant submits herewith verified English translations of the present application's priority documents (JP 11-241549 and JP 2000-174837). Because the present application's priority dates (August 27, 1999 and June 12, 2000) predate Konagaya's filing date (August 1, 2000), priority is perfected and Konagaya cannot be relied upon. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections be withdrawn.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

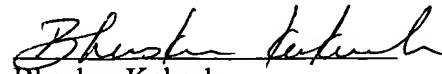
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Date: September 17, 2004


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